THE CATHOLIC WORKER

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Synod Report on Role of Women

By CHRISTOPHER LAMB

[Originally published in *The Tablet*, October 27, 2022. TheTablet.co.uk—Eds. Note]

Catholics want the role and vocation of women to be tackled urgently, according to a new report that has come out of the synodal listening process. The landmark synod report says that Catholics repeatedly express the desire for a more welcoming, inclusive Church that eradicates the misuse of power. The findings are contained in a forty-five page document released by the Holy See's synod office that summarizes the results of the unprecedented listening and dialogue process as part of the global synod.

"Women remain the majority of those who attend liturgy and participate in activities, men a minority; yet most decision-making and governance roles are held by men," the report states "From all continents comes an appeal for Catholic women to be valued first and foremost as baptized and equal members of the People of God. There is almost unanimous affirmation that women love the Church deeply, but many feel sadness because their lives are often not well understood, and their contributions and charisms not always valued," the document states.

The role and vocation of women are described as a "critical and urgent area," with the document calling for further discernment needed on how to include women in governance roles, the possibility of preaching and the female diaconate.

On the ordination of women to the priesthood, which Francis, following John Paul II, has ruled out, the report says a diversity of opinion was expressed, with some in favor and others considering it closed. Where there is a consensus, however, is on the need to value the contribution of women to the Church. The report cites a submission from the International Union of Superiors General, the body representing female religious sisters, which said "sexism in decision-making and Church language is prevalent in the Church" and that women religious were sometimes undervalued or viewed as "cheap labor."

Just over twelve months ago, Pope Francis launched the first part of the synod for "a synodal Church" that took place in Catholic communities worldwide and was the largest consultation exercise to have been conducted in human history. The document, published on Thursday, October 27th, offers a snapshot into the views of ordinary Catholics and provides a framework for the next phase of the synod process. It reflects back what has been said so far while the text will be discussed in forthcoming "continental assemblies" in early 2023.

Titled the "Working Document for the Continental Stage" of the synod, it is an unusual text as it does not offer any rulings on contested topics inside the Church, nor does it have teaching authority. Instead, it is a theological document aimed at furthering the synod process as it expresses a "listening to the voice of the Spirit" through the People of God. It was drawn up by a group of around thirty theologians, lay workers and bishops who met for several days in Frascati, near Rome, in September to synthesize reports from 112 bishops' conferences, different religious orders and around 150 lay groups. In the United States, 700,000 Catholics participated in the local synod listening exercises; in Spain, it was around 200,000; in France, 150,000; in England and Wales, 30,000. The numbers are without any obvious precedent in a Catholic context.

John 4:18 Nick Schuurman

Taking a passage from **Isaiah**, "Enlarge the Space of your Tent," the new document uses the biblical image of a tent for the Church as the guiding image for its core reflections.

"This is how many reports envision the Church: an expansive, but not homogeneous dwelling, capable of sheltering all, but open, letting in and out," the report says.

The tent is held together by its pegs, "the fundamentals of faith that do not change but can be moved and planted in ever new ground," while the tent's structure "must keep in balance the different forces and tensions to which it is subjected." Finally, "enlarging the tent requires welcoming others into it, making room for their diversity," and is about "moving toward embracing the Father and all of humanity." This "big tent" approach includes everyone and is prepared to change its attitudes and structures. The report references a range of groups that feel excluded, such as "remarried divorcees, single parents, people living in a polygamous marriage, LGBTQ people."

One of the barriers to a more synodal Church is clericalism, a phenomenon which sees power concentrated in the hands of an elite group—lay or ordained. Catholics, the synod document says, "signal the importance of ridding the Church of clericalism so that all its members, including priests and laity, can fulfill a common mission." As a remedy to clericalism, the report expresses "a deep and energetic desire for renewed forms of leadership—priestly, episcopal, religious and lay—that are relational and collaborative, and forms of authority capable of generating solidarity and co-responsibility."

The report also suggests the synod faces a major hurdle in getting members of the Church hierarchy to engage in the process. The "fears and resistance" of the clergy to the synod were frequently cited by the reports sent to Rome, while some of the "least evident voices" in the synod process were bishops and priests. The synod has faced no shortage of challenges, including a failure to organize gatherings in some places, a "meagre presence of the voice of young people," and those who rejected the process altogether.

But taking the steps to a more synodal church is still in its infancy. Francis, who will be eighty-six in December, recently extended the process to ensure it continues until October 2024 so as not to rush the exercise. The latest document strongly focuses on the process of becoming synodal, where listening and collective discernment become part of Church culture and structures. The report says the key challenge is finding ways for bishops,

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Created in the Image of God

By CHRISTINE ZUBA

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About a week ago, I was at a viewing for the mother of a lifelong friend. While there I spoke to a member of my friend's family who works in adoption services. She told me that a few of the kids that she has worked with are transgender. This led to her asking questions about my life and gender identity struggles. It was a conversation that I hope gave her more insight into the individual and unique paths we all walk, regardless of sex or gender.

About eight years ago, after twenty-nine years of marriage and two beautiful children, I walked into confession with something to discuss. For as long as I could remember, since about the age of three or four, I knew that I was different. As a child, for years I would go to bed praying that I would wake up as a girl. This is a story commonly echoed by many transgender people.

I am a life-long Catholic. As part of my transition it finally became time to speak to a priest, during the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I obviously knew what our Church taught with respect to being gay. At that point, however, the Church was still silent regarding transgender persons.

My faith has always been strong. I'll never claim to be the "perfect Catholic." I do make mistakes. Occasionally (but not often), I miss a Sunday Mass, and I've been known to utter a bad word once in a while (especially during Philadelphia Eagles football games). I do my best to be a good person though, trying to live each day like it may be my last.

I was, and still am, very confident in my relationship with my God. I knew I would be the same person walking out of the confessional that walked in, no matter what some might say or claim about me. While my outside was changing, everything else—my heart, my mind, my soul, and my faith—remained unchanged.

When I told our associate pastor I was transgender, the conversation immediately reverted to sex. I said, "Excuse me, Father, this has nothing at all to do with sex, this has to do with who I am. You can throw me out if you want, but if you do, I'm coming right back. This is my church too." Father said, "No, no, we're not going to do that." After a little more discussion, he said, "Let's together say a prayer to our Blessed Mother to help guide you on your journey." I was crying as I left confession.

About a month later, I returned to confession again, this time to our monsignor, whose first words were "God loves everyone." I cried again. Monsignor did say, however, that while he understood being gay, "the transgender subject is somewhat new. I'll need you to help me learn."

I've been blessed. While I had a very positive reaction from my priests, I know others who have experienced the complete opposite: they were told that they are sinners, evil, or that they're not Catholic. One of my best friends was even physically carried out of church after being refused communion.

Before the coronavirus shut things down, I had lunch with a local priest who baptized

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Ferry Named For Dorothy Day

By AMANDA W. DALOISIO

The sun was bright and cheery, and the weather unseasonably warm, as we gathered on Staten Island on November 4th for the dedication of New York City's newest ferry—the Dorothy Day. This fleet of ferries, all of them rather large and painted orange, runs from the southern tip of Manhattan to Staten Island. The rides are free for all, and it is estimated that 75,000 people ride the over 117 trips each day. I must admit that prior to that morning, I was a little indifferent to this dedication. But the morning of, as I looked out over New York harbor and felt the sun and the breeze, I thought, perhaps this is a lovely and surprising gesture. And I was grateful.

Dorothy loved Staten Island. She lived with Forster in a cottage by the sea in what was called Spanish Camp. It was here that she nurtured her deep appreciation for the natural world; it was here that she embraced Catholicism and gave birth to Tamar. Even after returning to Manhattan and beginning the Catholic Worker, she would return to Staten Island for the rest of her life. In 1977 she wrote, "How rich we are , we who profess voluntary poverty as a foundation for our work as agitators, to be able to take a ferry ride and be, within an hour, in [Staten Island], a rural area which is still part of New York City…. My conversion took place here…. 'In the beginning, God created heaven and earth.' Looking out over the bay, the gulls, the paths in the sea, the tiny ripples stirring a patch of water here and there, the reflections of clouds on the surface—how beautiful it all is."

Arriving at the dedication, I experienced the pomp one might expect. Draped across the side of the ship was a US flag of enormous size. On the dais sat members of the city council, administrators of the NYC Department of Transportation and bishops from the archdiocese. There were mentions of the US and New York City as lands of opportunity and freedom, the singing of the national anthem, mixed with a prayer.

But there were also moments of genuine sharing and reflection. Ydanis Rodriquez, Department of Transportation Commissioner, reminded us of Dorothy's last arrest with the United Farmworkers union in California and connected it to the plight of farmers in New York. The speakers emphasized the service, compassion and dedication of Dorothy's work and her life—this being a legacy of New Yorkers.

There were moments of joy, Catholic Worker style. The Filthy Rotten System band played, delighting the crowd with an extra verse to a well-known folk song. "If I had a ferry…." Martha Hennessy spoke with humor and truth. "Today is cause for celebration and all of us who love Dorothy are grateful. She would probably have something to say about resource allocation, but I think she would be pleased…. Born in Brooklyn and returning in 1917—she loved New York. She loved our city's homeless poor and thrown away people—and she loved the women and men who came to help at the Catholic Worker, some for a few days, some for a lifetime. She loved her many friends on various New York margins, many who shared her dreams and disappointments.

"Dorothy was a New Yorker, and this was her city—when she was young, she loved its bars and theaters, she always loved its opera and bookstores and feisty labor unions and city squares where her co-worker Peter Maurin could join other dissenters in inspiring the rest of us. And she loved out-of-the-way churches and the quiet strangers who worshiped with her.

"And yes, she loved Staten Island where she spent happy days with the man she loved, where they conceived a child and, at considerable sacrifice, found her way into the Church. She is buried on Staten Island.

"It was love like that, for humanity and for God who made and loved us, that inspired her vocation. The practice of the Works of Mercy, her journalism to expose poverty and injustice, the formation of community in city and countryside, trying to build a new society in which it is easier to live, and through her nonviolent civil resistance to war, the most destructive abandonment of love.

"Dorothy Day's love for New York embraced those she met each day and poured forth to all people, everywhere, especially those who suffer and are thus closest to our loving God. Be assured today that her radical challenges to both Church and State, her intense determination to resist so many of our unjust practices, they all arose from love, including love for New York and its people and the city's rivers and seas and skies and indeed the ferry, and most of all from her love for her neighbors, which includes all of us. It is no small thing to know that here, today, the city Dorothy Day loved says, at least for a moment, 'Dorothy, we love you back!'"

At the end of the ceremony, Martha performed the ritual smashing of the champagne bottle. As she raised the bottle over her head she said, "In the name of Dorothy Day may we abolish war and nuclear weapons!" And so radical challenge broke through the pomp, even still. ✣

Kate Cowley

St. Joseph House

By HIDEKO OTAKE

On the brilliantly sunny but cold Thanksgiving Day morning last year, I was standing at the door of St. Joe's with Gerry, as door persons of the day. I peeped out and found a long line of people in front of the house, along the brick walls and windows decorated with street-style graffiti. I recognized excitement but also some tension on the faces of the volunteers inside. This morning was the first time St. Joe's reopened to serve the meal inside the house, which was not possible during the nearly two and half years of the worst time of Covid-19. Everybody wished for the best, but no one knew how this old but new serving system would work. Inside the kitchen, preparation had started early. In the dining area, five tables had been set. The surfaces of the two old wooden tables were shining as Carmen had varnished the worn tabletops a few days before. Carmen is a spiritual and moral voice in the house, but he is also the plumber and handyman who takes care of many maintenance issues in this old house.

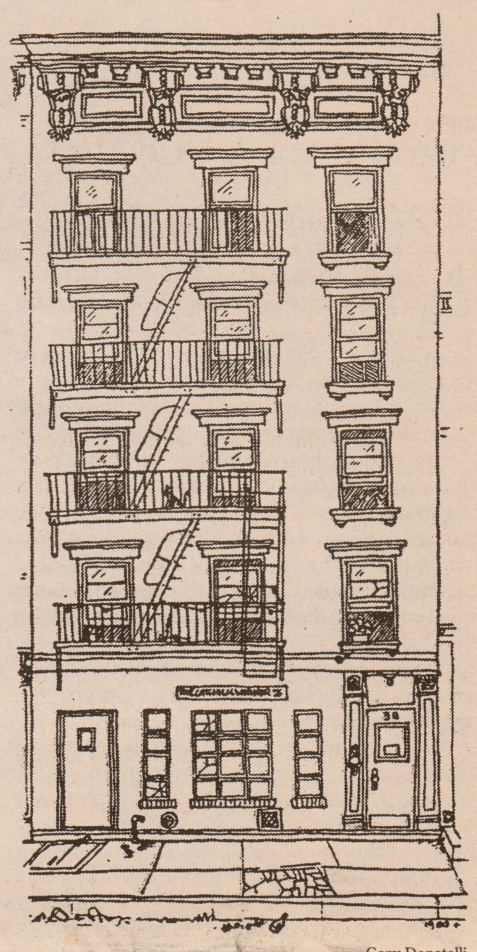
The sound of cracking a hundred eggs was endless at the cooking table. Hams were in the oven, strong "cowboy coffee" brewed in a huge pot. Scrambled eggs, slices of ham, doughnuts and coffee are on the special menu for Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations at St. Joe's. More than twenty volunteers made the space crowded. It looked like a homecoming reunion. The old-timers joined the current regulars, like me, who showed up to dedicate our time to the needy and renew our affection for the house community.

After gathering in a circle to pray, the door was finally opened. Gerry made an announcement, "All right. The first twenty-six come in. Please twenty-six, then…." "Get out!" somebody on the line shouted. Everybody laughed cheerfully. This was a good sign. "Then get out 'cause the other people are waiting," Gerry continued. Welcomed inside, the first twenty-six rushed to the empty seats. Shut off from the cold outdoor air, our guests looked relaxed and enjoyed the meal. We used real cups and utensils, not paper and plastic ones. Volunteers ran around to serve and refill coffee like in an authentic restaurant. A festive mood was in the air.

After one and a half hours of running around serving, the kitchen was closed at eleven. Nobody said "Bravo" out loud, but the quiet satisfaction from giving the best hospitality that we could was revealed in our conversation. "I was amazed at how politely the people behaved. Everybody said please when they asked. They were so courteous," said Rocco, a regular volunteer who always reminds me of Joe Pesci's characters in Scorsese movies. I did agree.

Our biggest concern before the day started was that the serving system shift would make a longer wait for the people who were not among the first seated. We worried that this could add an extra burden on people who already experience rough times. But our guests seemed to accept the change willingly. Even among the first twenty-six, some stayed longer but most left right after the meal to give their seat for others waiting outside. Under the sky, the remaining people made no complaints and smiled back at us when we asked them to wait. The patience and tolerance of those who experience hardship on the streets always humbles me.

Covid-19 had drastically affected the hospitality at St. Joe's. As the pandemic started to become real in the city, any public gathering was prohibited, especially in crowded inside environments. Many volunteers stopped coming and tried to stay at home. That was when I discovered the Catholic Worker and started to volunteer in the kitchen. I found a post by Anthony, an anti-nuclear weapons activist and a loyal associate of the Catholic Worker, on his Facebook page. With a few photos of St. Joe's kitchen, he announced that the house had started to serve breakfast on the sidewalk. I had seen Anthony and Bud at many peace and justice rallies around the city. With guitar, harmonica, and occasionally Paul's accordion, their performance style of people's music was cheerful and powerful and opened up people's hearts. Bud, the bandleader, always says they never say no to anyone when asked to play.



Gary Donatelli

One month before, at the very end of February, I happened to have invited them to play music for an event I had organized. about Okinawa. The islanders there have been resiliently fighting against construction of the new US military base that will destroy a life-rich environment and threaten peace in East Asia. Bud and Anthony showed up with Raymond, who plays trombone. Among the few songs they played, "We Shall Overcome" at the finale was phenomenal. We sang and danced to this iconic song which the sit-in protesters, under the oppression by the Japanese central government at the gate of Camp Schwab Base, also often sang and danced to. Still, I had never heard the name Catholic Worker until I found Anthony's post, and it was much later that I learned that the name of the band is The Filthy Rotten System, a phrase taken from a famous quote by Dorothy Day.

I knocked on the door of St. Joe's for the first time as a volunteer at 8:30 am on March 31, 2020. People had already started working. I met a bunch of regular volunteers including Anthony, two Johns—Bagpiper John and Reverend John—and Greg, who celebrated his twentieth anniversary of volunteering in 2021.

St. Joe's world famous soup is cooked mainly by Geoffrey, if not Phil or Carmen. People took out sandwiches and desserts in a bag with coffee at the window or from tables on the sidewalk. Preparing food for one or two hundred people requires physical labor. Crates of vegetables and milk move from the kitchen to the stockroom or walk-in refrigerator in the basement, or vice versa. I wondered if the workers there could be exhausted. But Bud, the anchor of the kitchen, was excited. He said, "This is the heart of my day." Energy and joy filled the kitchen as we felt people on the streets desperately needed our services.

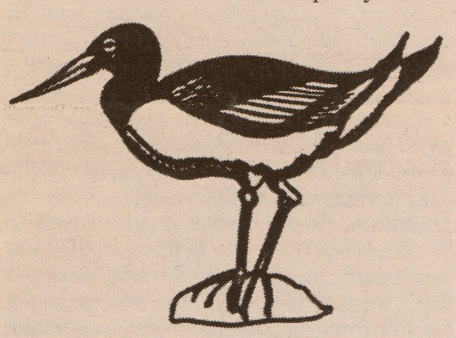
At St. Joe's house, every Saturday evening, if not early Sunday morning, someone shouts at the bottom of the stairs, "Truck!" as a call for help from the people upstairs. The truck arrives from New Jersey, delivering dozens of crates of bread, vegetables, fruits, milk,

and sweets. Donations are blessings from the extended community and the lifeline for St. Joe's. The clothing donations make our Wednesday clothes day possible.

From the kitchen walls, portraits of the guardian saints watch over us every day and night. They are Martin Luther King Jr, Daniel Berrigan smiling and making a peace sign with handcuffed wrists, and Dorothy Day, of course. They remind us of the basics of the Catholic Worker movement: faith and belief and a strong will for social justice and peace. In a group shot of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7, Carmen is smiling.

Carmen returned to the Vigil for Yemen, held every Saturday at Union Square, after coming back to the house following his incarceration. This weekly witness started as a week-long vigil and fast in April 2017 in front of the United Nations. Centered around a long banner saying "Yemen is Starving," a silent line of people holding hand-written signs makes a powerful presence in the crowded park, appealing to the passers-by to be aware of the suffering of the people, especially the children starving in Yemen. After five years, the vigil is also a reunion for local and visiting activists fighting for peace and justice.

The Filthy Rotten System band gives St. Joe's an artistic and cheerfully rebellious vibe. Most people may only have the opportunity to enjoy the performances by the very core members of the band. However, if you are lucky enough to encounter their rehearsals in St. Joe's kitchen after dinner, you could enjoy the richer sounds the band offers. You may hear the vibe made by bassist Brian and drummer Jack, Bud's son. Jim, a **Catholic Worker** editor and former member of the band, sometimes shows up with his guitar and gives a deep flavor to the music with a resonantly strong voice. Jonathan's violin and Liam's sax make their sounds superbly soulful.

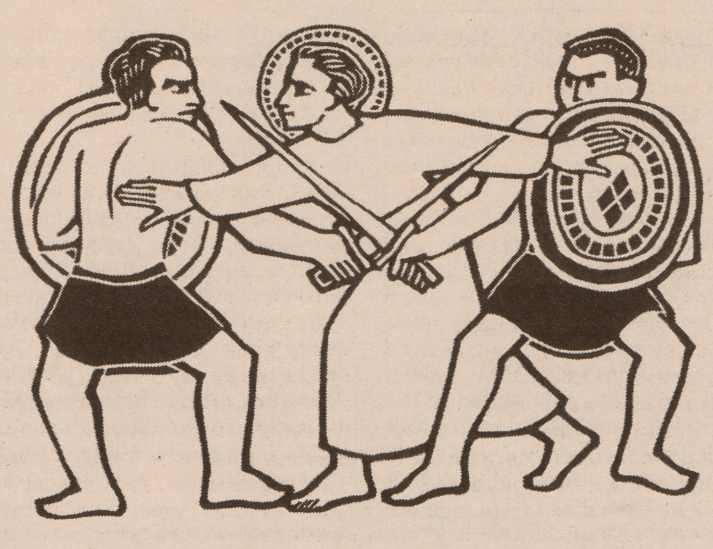


Rita Corbin

The US bishops' endorsement of Dorothy Day's canonization got media attention among the general public. On November 4th, the commissioning of the new Staten Island Ferry, the Dorothy Day, created an opportunity for a celebratory event among the New York community of the Catholic Worker. Alan Winson of Bar Crawl Radio was running around to collect the people's voices, posing a tricky question. He asked the people's opinion on what Dorothy would think if she knew the ferry named after her cost nearly $100 million. My favorite whimsical answer came from Bud: "I think she would be opposed to it. She would say it's a lot of money that can be used to help people. To help others and to create peace in the world was Dorothy's mission in life. If she were here, I think she would lobby very hard to turn it into a twenty-four hour floating soup kitchen, where it could house people and feed people back and forth and give them a lovely view of New York and the Statue of Liberty." Martha responded to Alan, "I don't know what cost $84 million. That's questionable, but let's delight in the fun things of life while we can."

Later in the ceremony, The Filthy Rotten System played "If I Had a Hammer." Just before the fourth verse started, the faces of Bud and Anthony got mischievous. "If I had a ferry…" Bud sang. The audience exploded with laughter and cheers. They changed the lyrics. They sang for the imaginary boat, which is the ferry for justice and freedom.

And then, at the very moment the bottle burst on the deck, I heard Martha shouting, "In the name of Dorothy Day, may we abolish war and nuclear weapons." I do love this community. How blessed and honored I am to be able to be a part of it. ✣



St. Telemachus Ade Bethune

CW Gathering in Worcester

By CHARLIE ENÚF

When we walked into the Catholic grade school gym that housed the opening ceremonies of the 2022 Catholic Worker gathering, I was flushed with memories of chucking up half court shots for never fulfilled $5 bets during sixth grade basketball practice. It was picturesque, tranquil and filled with the chatter of people reacquainting themselves after not seeing each other for years due to the ongoing pandemic. The 70s style hoops watched over us while we ate near-gourmet salmon and veggies. I watched as people from every community in attendance stood up and shared their name. Most of the names I recognized from the countless stories I had heard from just being around the Worker for the past six months. It felt nice to have facial reference points now. Soon all the tables were moved and Carmen and I ended up in an intense ghost basketball match for which he still owes me five dollars. Soon enough the moon reached its heights and night one was over.

Tess and I stayed in some outside structures of one of the Worker Houses in Worcester (the one with the barber shop). Tess' greenhouse accommodation held slightly more heat than the loft of a chapel I slept in. Grouper's **Ruins** played through my headphones and I stared through the cracks in the wood at the few stars and wondered what the most profound thought a sleeping Worker had thought in this chapel loft. I wondered if I would befriend that person tomorrow. The wondering occurred long enough into the four star night that I woke up with a headache, longing for an endless fountain of water. A stereotypical two-spout college water fountain at Holy Cross University about half an hour later revealed itself as my savior. As I filled my bottle I wondered if any of my college classmates had ever become Workers, but no one else there had a Cincinnati accent.

I've learned that there is a certain *amor fati*-esque reaction to showing up at Catholic Worker events. The work and lifestyle of being a Catholic Worker not only gives you a certain look (calloused hands, years-old graphic tees, sore legs and gray streaks) but also gives you a certain way of walking around the world. As a younger person, being around veteran Catholic Workers often makes you feel like you are looking into your future, into your fate—in some sense a surreal experience. You are constantly surrounded by people you want to emulate, habits you want to break, and stories you want to learn from.

When you first arrive at the Worker you find yourself just wanting to take in every story possible, but after a while I have found myself more intrigued about the way people talk about their work. In a sense, at the gathering I found myself less intrigued with the narrative of the many Worker houses, but instead the metanarrative of the houses. I am less attracted and attentive to what people have done, but more to how people dream in the first place. When I stared into the mirror of my fate, I questioned not how can I get there, but first how can I hold onto the dream. And that first section of the gathering was a brilliant introduction and a grounding in the foundational approach of the Worker. Key highlights of these first presentations include: the Works of Mercy vs. the works of war, how broad nonviolence can be, and what does it look like for a young person to be dedicated to the Worker. Intriguing if not overcooked topics. If Friday night in the picturesque middle school gym was our hors d'oeuvres, we had fully entered into the gathering's appetizer. And friends, we were salivating for more, but first we ate deli meat and chips.

For our entrée we broke into small groups for two separate sessions of which I went to one about Amistad house in New Haven, Connecticut and their work to invite a tent encampment to form in their backyard, and then I went to another about the story of Jessica Reznicek and Ruby Montoya's brave actions against the Dakota Access Pipeline. One could say that I found a lit match below my ass, because it was just about a month later that I paid a short visit to Amistad house and found their work to be quite revolutionary while also completely practical. Mark Coville of the Amistad house refuses to take the Worker, its models, and its potential for granted. I was amazed by Mark's insistence to dream. Workers sometimes gets critiqued for their lack of imagination on how to move forward and their reluctance to change, but you could tell, at least in Connecticut, that imagination is alive and well.

What happened next at the gathering was somewhat of a blur. We had dinner, speakers and I overheard so many people catching up that it felt more like a family reunion than anything else. I guess after all, that is what this all was. The young people's caucus (below forty-ish) got together at dinner and we did a mixture of tension release, check-ins, and classic shootin' the shit. (I hope you all are doing well, dearly, dearly.)

Before I knew it the gathering had reached its dessert and people were dancing, singing and leading us through squat exercises in the talent show. Then some tables were moved and people started dancing. The playlist was eerily similar to my high school prom DJ set from 2015, so after I yelled "I've met these guys and they were kinda mean" during Walk the Moon's "Shut Up and Dance With Me," I headed back out to listen to Grouper in the chapel loft.

I am by no means a person easily impressed, but I can say with a certain amount of clarity, that I enjoyed the gathering. Our lives in hospitality are so often spent with our heads over pots of soup and our hands folding t-shirts that we rarely get opportunities to dream together. Even if there was a lot of catch up to do together after the lack of a gathering due to Covid-19, there were slight moments of communal dreaming that meant a lot to me. I will admit that I did mourn the fact that there was not any young person that had only been a Worker for say two years, and thus I had no model to help me envision my near future. I guess that's a person I'll have to create for myself. It was good to see slightly older community members laugh with their friends, and it was good to be introduced to said friends. It was good to be together. Unfortunately we had to leave before the closing liturgy on Sunday but not before eating breakfast at the Mustard Seed House, whose 50th anniversary inspired this entire gathering. I ate some classic breakfast food, marveled at how smooth and fresh the drywall looked, and then we headed out. We drove through the fall trees of New England and found ourselves back in New York City with a couple more familiar faces, some new dreams, and a sore back from a chapel loft. ✣

> "If one does not practice nonviolence in one's personal relations with others and hopes to use it in bigger affairs, one is vastly mistaken. Nonviolence like charity must begin at home. But if it is necessary for the individual to be trained in nonviolence, it is even more necessary for the nation to be trained likewise. One cannot be nonviolent in one's own circle and violent outside it."
>
> —**M. K. Gandhi**, January 1, 1939

BORDER DISORDER

Once again our friends at Hope Border Institute have written an excellent report on conditions at the US-Mexico border in Texas. In this report they focused on Venezuelans who have been impacted by the new policies adopted by the Biden Administration: "US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), has encountered over 180,000 Venezuelan migrants along the Southwest border from October 2021 to September 2022. In September 2022 alone, there were over 33,804 Venezuelan migrants encountered, significantly exceeding the 24,000 cap that the new parole program plans to accept. Previously, in the absence of agreements with Venezuela or Mexico, the United States was unable to expel Venezuelans under Title 42 to either of those countries. That changed, however, on October 12th with the announcement of a bilateral agreement between the United States and Mexico, under which Mexico would receive expelled Venezuelans in exchange for 40,000 additional non-agricultural temporary work visas for Mexico.

"Vulnerable persons on the move from Venezuela, including asylum seekers, who attempted to enter the United States…are ineligible for the parole program. Strict eligibility requirements—having a sponsor, being able to pay the cost of plane tickets and having a passport—left no path for relief for the people in the most vulnerable situations and have left an estimated 83,000 Venezuelans in Mexico as of September 2022 in a cruel state of limbo."

Key findings include: "The Biden administration has expanded Title 42 to Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers at the US-Mexico border, an unjustified and discriminatory use of a public health order as a migration management tool.

"This program can be used as a precedent to create similar asylum-denying programs applied to other nationalities, allowing for the further externalization of migration processing and enforcement. This dramatic expansion of Title 42 has left over 83,000 Venezuelans stranded with no ability to access international protection at the border. The removal process has separated family units and placed individuals, including vulnerable people such as young children, single mothers and elderly people on the streets, lacking access to food, shelter and medical support."

For further information, contact Hope Border Institute, 499 St. Matthews Street, El Paso, TX 79907 or hopeborder.org

—**Joanne Kennedy**

To the People of Ukraine

November 24, 2022

Vatican City

Dear Ukrainian Brothers and Sisters,

For a full nine months, the absurd folly of war has been unleashed upon your land. Your skies have constantly echoed the grim sound of explosions and the alarming wail of sirens. Your cities have been hammered by bombs, as a shower of missiles has caused death, destruction and sorrow, hunger, thirst and freezing cold. Great numbers of people have taken flight into your streets, leaving behind their homes and their dear ones. Alongside the great rivers of your nation, great streams of blood and tears flow daily.

I would like to add my own tears to yours, and to assure you that I am daily close to you and bear you in my heart and in my prayers. Your pain is my pain. Today, in the cross of Jesus, I see all of you who are experiencing the terror unleashed by this aggression. Truly, the cross, the instrument of the Lord's torture, is present anew in the signs of torture found on corpses, in the mass graves discovered in different cities, and in so many other brutal images that leave us appalled and make us cry out, "Why? How can human beings treat other human beings in this way?"

I think often of the many tragic stories that I have heard, especially those involving little ones: how many children have been killed, wounded or orphaned, torn from their mothers! With you, I weep for every child killed in this war, like Kira in Odessa, like Lisa in Vinnytsia, like hundreds of other children. In each of them, our very humanity has been deeply scarred. Now they are in God's arms; they see our struggles and pray that they may soon be ended. Yet how can we fail to feel anguish for their loss and for all those others, young and old, who have been deported? The pain felt by the mothers of Ukraine is incalculable.

I think too of you, young people, who in courageous defense of your homeland have had to take up arms rather than pursue your cherished dreams for the future. I think of you, wives who have lost your husbands, gritting your teeth and quietly carrying on with dignity and determination, and making every sacrifice possible for your children. I think of you adults, who strive in every way possible to protect your dear ones; and you, the elderly, who instead of enjoying a peaceful old age have been cast into the dark night of war. I also think of you, women who were victims of violence and bear immense burdens in your heart, and of all who are pained in soul and body. I think of you and I am close to you, with affection and admiration for the way you are facing such bitter trials.

My thoughts also turn to you, the volunteers who daily sacrifice yourselves to serve others, and to you, the pastors of God's holy people who—often at the risk of your own safety—have remained at the side of your people, offering them the consolation of God and the solidarity of their brothers and sisters. With creativity, you have turned community rooms and religious houses into shelters that provide hospitality, assistance and meals to those in difficulty. I think, too, of the refugees and the internally displaced, far from their homes, many of which are now destroyed. I pray for the civil authorities, who have the responsibility of governing the country in these tragic times and of taking farsighted decisions for peace and the development of the economy amid the ruin of so many vital infrastructures, both in the cities and in the countryside.

Dear brothers and sisters, in all this great flood of evil and pain—ninety years after the terrible genocide of the Holodomor—I stand in admiration of your steadfast resistance. Even amid the experience of this enormous tragedy, the Ukrainian people have never given into discouragement or self-pity. The world has come to recognize a people bold and strong, a people that suffers and prays, weeps and struggles, resists and continues to hope, a noble people of martyrs. I remain close to you in heart and prayer, with humanitarian concern that you never feel alone, that you not become inured to war, that you will not be left alone, at present but even more so in the future, when there may be a temptation to forget your sufferings.

In these months, in which bitter cold only adds to the tragedy that you are experiencing, it is my hope that the affection of the Church, the power of prayer and the love of so many of your brothers and sisters throughout the world be so many caresses on your face. In a few weeks, Christmas will be here, and the harshness of your sufferings will be all the more deeply felt. I would like to return with you to Bethlehem, to the troubles the Holy Family had to face on that cold and dark night. Yet a light arrived: not from men but from God, not from earth but from heaven.

May Our Lady, the Lord's Mother and our own, watch over you. To her Immaculate Heart, in union with the bishops of the world, I have consecrated the Church and all humanity, and particularly your own country and Russia. To her maternal heart I now commend your sufferings and your tears. From Mary, who as a great son of your land once wrote "brought God into our world," let us never tire of imploring the anxiously-awaited gift of peace, in the sure knowledge that "nothing will be impossible for God" (**Lk** 1:37). May he grant fulfillment to the rightful aspirations of your hearts, heal your wounds and bestow his consolation upon you. I am with you, I pray for you and I ask you to pray for me.

May the Lord bless you and Our Lady keep you.

—His Holiness Pope Francis

BOOK REVIEW

THE GREATEST EVIL IS WAR by Chris Hedges. Seven Stories Press, New York, 2022. Reviewed by Bill Griffin.

A powerful protest against our government's current escalating war with Russia jumps off every page of this book. Chris Hedges has been dissecting the lies of the military industrial complex in his prolific journalism since the 1980s. Thoughtful and compassionate, he has been a biting, maverick chronicler and critic of US policies in Central America, the Middle East and in Central Europe as an independent war correspondent. This latest book is a philosophical companion to his satirically titled **War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning** (see **CW** June-July 2003).

Hedges tells us clearly in his new book, war itself is our real enemy, not Russia. He is not a member of any hate-America-first club, but he refuses to fall into the easy intellectual trap of believing propaganda or taking sides in a conflict between nation states. It is a fallen world; we are all sinners. And it is human beings who will be saved or not and never nation states.

In the current crisis, he holds the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance, as most culpable and responsible for the escalation of war with Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dismantling of its own military alliance (the Warsaw Pact), NATO's 1989 promises to Russia not to extend NATO membership to countries on Russia's borders were flagrantly broken over and over. Now Poland has a NATO missile installation one hundred miles from its border with Russia. Recall how the US reacted in the 1960s when there was the threat of placing nuclear missiles in Cuba, ninety miles from Florida.

Hedges writes, "The invasion of Ukraine would, I expect, never have happened if these promises had been kept. Russia has every right to feel threatened, betrayed and angry. But to understand is not to condone. The invasion of Ukraine, under post-Nuremberg law, is a criminal war of aggression." However he goes on, "If truth is the first casualty of war, ambiguity is the second. The bellicose rhetoric embraced and amplified by the American press, demonizing Vladimir Putin, is infantile and dangerous. That the inversion of the conflict is true in the Russian media fuels the conflict."

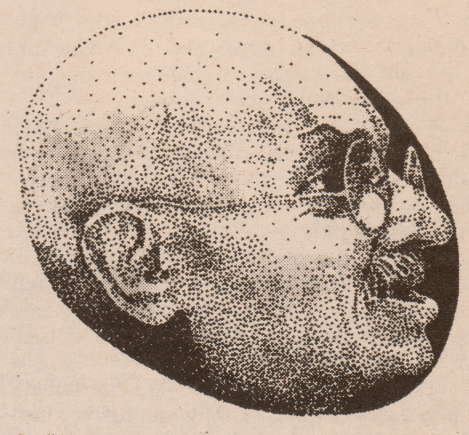
Hedges finds the hypocrisy of former US government officials, who were responsible for the horrendous destruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, to be stunning. For example, Condoleeza Rice, the former National Security Advisor who helped orchestrate our second invasion of Iraq, did so by terrorizing the US public with fears that Iraq might have nuclear weapons. She is now loudly advocating on Fox News that the harshest economic sanctions be imposed on Russia and hinting at possible military measures. Hedges points out that twenty years ago, "her rationale for preemptive war, which under post-Nuremberg law is a criminal war of aggression, is no different than that peddled by Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, who says the Russian invasion is being carried out to prevent Ukraine from obtaining nuclear weapons."

Censorship from employers and the US government have come down hard on Hedges, but he seems to be able to take it in stride. **The New York Times** fired him for his denunciation of the first US invasion of Iraq, in the nineties. Now, the US government is silencing him by shutting down the multimedia platform, Russia Today (RT) where he had a program. Hedges notes that "RT had a tiny media footprint, but it gave a platform to American dissidents who challenged corporate capitalism, imperialism, war and American oligarchy." He also points out that "the same censorship of anti-war sentiment is happening now in Russia, but we should remember it happened here during the inception and initial stages of the invasion of Iraq."

The excruciating sufferings of children during all wartimes is given particular attention in a devastating chapter entitled, "Orphans." Hedges is profoundly haunted by all the broken lives of children he has witnessed during his lifetime of reporting from war zones. This is a very hard read because Hedges is a vivid and uncompromising writer, but he wants us to see up close what war destroys. The reality is much worse, he tells us, but he wants us to see a little of what we are asking for, when we want war.

The concluding sixteenth chapter of this clearly written, gut-punch of a book is titled, "Permanent War." Hedges is inspired by the analysis of the great anti-imperialist writer, Randolph Bourne, in his essay **The State**. Writing in urgent opposition to the US entry into the inferno of World War One, Bourne stated, "War is the health of the State." Dorothy Day often used his acid comment in her writings and in her conversations. Following Bourne's line of thought, Hedges believes that it is quite possible that US civil society may one day collapse economically and socially under the crushing weight of the State's evermore gargantuan military budget. Hedges sees the dangers as follows: "Permanent war which has defined the United States since World War Two extinguishes liberal democratic movement. It cheapens culture into nationalist cant. It degrades and corrupts education and the media and wrecks the economy. The liberal democratic forces tasked with maintaining an open society become impotent."

The core of Hedges' appeal to us is that we must do all in our power to resist and shout down the renewed cries of warmongers who want a new war against Russia because it will increase the profits of their military industrial complex. But there is more at stake than that. Here is how Hedges sees our dire plight: "The provocation of establishing a NATO missile base one hundred miles from Russia's border was foolish and highly irresponsible. It never made geo-political sense. This does not however excuse the invasion of Ukraine. Yes, the Russians were baited. But they reacted by pulling the trigger. This is a crime. Their crime. Let us pray for a ceasefire. Let us work to return to diplomacy and sanity, for a moratorium on arms shipments to Ukraine. Let us hope for an end to war before we stumble into a nuclear holocaust that devours us all." Chris Hedges' difficult book is a very necessary one. ✣



Gandhi Michelle Dick

Memories of a CW Childhood

By NEIL SMITH

[This is an excerpt from a yet to be published memoir entitled *A Goodbye to Rita & Charlie***—Eds. Note]**

August 1953 issued in a flurry of activity, starting with Ammon leaving on his annual one-man vigil against the bomb. Ammon was a conscientious objector, and had been horrified when, on August 6th and 9th of 1945, respectively, the United States dropped the atomic bomb on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—issuing in a new era, as Ammon saw it, beyond the Holocaust. Never had such acts, in all the history of the world, stood out against life.... To let loose war on the world was the work of the devil, surely, but to let loose such a monstrous weapon was a step second only to total extinction which even the devil opposed. That is, the world can only host one devil at a time. "In this instance," Ammon would say, "the devil you know is by far more preferable to the one you don't know." These views Ammon shared on occasion across the dinner table with the other diners, in explaining his opposition to the bomb.

And so Ammon took it on himself to accomplish all he could to bring a stop to so cataclysmic an end. Ammon had assumed that if we were to survive, nay, live, the bomb must be removed from our midst, forever and forever. Ergo, he began a one-man campaign to have the bomb banned. And whatever state he found himself in on August 6th after 1945, he would hold a one man vigil and fast on its Capitol steps, taking only water, and extending the vigil by a day every year. He would stand on the state capitol's steps as would a sentry, carrying a solitary sign that simply read, "Ban The Bomb!" Then past nightfall he would collapse on the steps where he'd sleep, then on wakening the next day before dawn he'd resume his solitary watch.

That year he would demonstrate seven days, just taking water, and by the time of his death, on January 14, 1970, he had been fasting and standing vigil for twenty-four days on the anniversary of the dropping of those bombs.

Ammon had said on more than one occasion: "Love without courage and wisdom is sentimentality, as with the ordinary church member. Courage without love and wisdom is foolhardiness, as with the ordinary soldier. Wisdom without love and courage is cowardice, as with the ordinary intellectual. Therefore one with love, courage and wisdom is one in a million who moves the world, as with Jesus, Buddha and Gandhi."

On his departure Ammon left with no more than that with which he'd come, the clothes on his back. Some of us clustered in the hall, while others of us spilt out on to the front lawn—all, that is, save Cyril— as Ammon stood in the doorway, to bid him farewell and wish him Godspeed. His undertaking was not without risk. Though no taller than five foot ten, Ammon was a force to be reckoned with, a towering presence with magnetic appeal—perhaps different in temperament than Rasputin but no less similar— who easily commanded respect of everyone he encountered. While not a founder or co-founder of the Catholic

Worker, he was an example of what action, Catholic action, committed action and social pacifist action meant. He was a legend round the Catholic Worker and was considered with awe; few men, outside saints and yogis, could boast such inner and outer attainment, and he had deservingly earned the sobriquet, "The One Man Revolution."

Stanley Vishnewski was the first of us to grasp Ammon's hand. Stanley was considerably younger than Ammon, and saw in him an example, someone worthy of emulation. Whereas Ammon was sinewy, lean and grizzly headed, Stanley was tall, corpulent, bear like and balding prematurely. They engaged each other with uttermost regards, searching each other's face, eyes and soul for a link of identity, a shared commonality beyond the mean, the corporeal, the electrical burst of fire that informed their being no less, a communion of minds. They'd known each other for some time; they'd stood on the West Side waterfront with striking stevedores, walked picket lines for social causes, lived among the downtrodden of Appalachia, sold the penny **Catholic Worker** on street corners; and, in their separate travels, encountered one another at various Catholic Worker houses across the country while engaged in Works of Mercy.

Stanley said, "I hope to see you again soon." "I'll keep watch for you," said Ammon as their hands fell apart, and Ammon leaned over to embrace Agnes. She squeezed him tightly to her frail body; they, too, were old friends. "Stay safe," Agnes advised. "I will little sister," he responded.

Agnes cleaved to him. "I'm already an old woman and I don't know I'll see you again," she added, faint of voice. "You'll outlive me," he charitably said.

Slipping, by fits and starts, into unchartered regions of dementia, Father Stanislaus stood on the staircase in a witless state of wonder. Faint of heart, Father Kiley lurked in the background behind Leonard, Emily, Johnny, Hans and Ed, Thelma and Kit, shoulder to shoulder, bottlenecked in the narrow hall, in which our family had first been received into the Catholic Worker house earlier that year. All but Father Kiley waved and called, "Ammon! Ammon!"

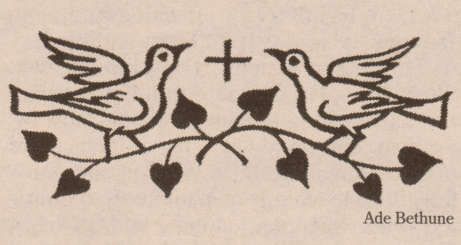
Ammon fondly waved in return, over the heads of those up front. Father Kiley finally waved, as if an afterthought. "Someone should write a poem about you," said Max Bodenheim in earnest, as Ammon lay a conciliatory hand on the old poet's shoulder. Max's wife, Ruth, was ostensibly off in search of a publisher for his new work and therefore absent as usual. "If anyone can do it justice, Max, it's you," said Ammon, granting his consent for such an effort. I do not rightly know that poem was ever written.

Cyril stole from his room and peered down stairs, beyond Father Stanislaus, with a sour grin, then returned to his room with a dismissive wave of the hand. Rita cheerily squeezed Ammon, and he laughed heartily. "It's always such a pleasure to encounter you," he said, enfolding her cherubic, robust form in his arms. "As it is you," she said. "Will we see you this way again?""Only if you promise to marry me," he teased."Then there's really no need for you to leave," Rita too replied in jest. "I must go west," he said. "There's so much work needs doing." Rita sighed in acknowledgment. "May God go with you." "And may He keep you in the palms of His hands, 'With the wind at your back and the sun in your face.'" He smiled wanly, but congenially.

Rita released her grasp of Ammon, as he reached over and kissed Mama affectionately on the cheek. "This wife of yours is a jewel beyond price," Ammon bluntly told Daddy, who flushed as if unmasked. "You better watch some cad doesn't steal her from you." Mama didn't know what to make of Ammon. She understood Dorothy but Ammon puzzled her. I don't think she was afraid of him, though he intimidated Daddy. Then again, he intimidated everybody. They all loved and respected him but they were intimidated just the same.

As for me, I was in awe of Ammon, as was everyone else, hence I was afraid of him too, and when he came towards me, I drew back. "Mac," he said, leaning into my ear, "Remember —'Be bold! Be bold! but not too bold or else your blood will run cold.'" I yanked my hand from his as if from shock, and stiffened, startled at his words. He simply winked at me, satisfied, and slipped out the door.

David Dellinger lunged forwards, bumping Father Kiley aside. "Excuse me," he apologized, as he accosted Ammon, grasping his hand. "Mr. Hennacy," he then exclaimed, "you don't know what it meant to be able to talk to you like this these past weeks. I can't wait to get back to seminary school and share my experiences with like-minded fellows." "Glad to have been of service," Ammon said, amused. He waved from the yard, "Good-bye all," he called, and crossed the lawn where Edda, Lucille, Charlie-boy and Que-que were straggling out. He hurriedly embraced them, rounded the lush hedge, climbed into the waiting car, after which Dorothy pulled out with a farewell honk of the horn. ✣



Ade Bethune

Big Apple Greets Migrants

By BILL GRIFFIN

Temple Shaaray Tefila's Day of Service held November 20th, included a panel on NYC's current migrant crisis. The speakers galvanized all those who were there with a clear championship of our duty to welcome the stranger. Beginning in July, the governors of Texas and Florida cynically decided to bus asylum seekers, arriving at their international borders, to New York City. Roughly thirty thousand human beings, including families with little children, have arrived, so far, at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in NYC.

The humanitarian response of the Big Apple's civil society, its synagogues, churches, mosques and grassroots neighborhood organizations has been extraordinary. Their initiatives to provide concrete help to the new immigrants were vividly described by Ruth Messinger, the very progressive and articulate former city council member and by Ilze Thielmann, the main organizer of Team TLC. These are unpaid volunteers, who greet the arriving buses and their careworn passengers with welcome bags. These contain food, hygiene products and maps showing how to get to the offices of NYC's social services. In cases of acute need, financial help is also given.

In September and October up to ten bus loads of immigrants were arriving daily, without any forwarning from state officials in Texas and Florida. The huge scale of NYC response of hospitality surprised everyone. According to Ruth Messinger, the two governors' mean plan to politically embarrass NYC which has declared itself a "sanctuary city for immigrants," has backfired. The governors are now themselves being criticized by the media and shamed and many fewer buses are arriving at this point. How this will all play out remains to be seen?

Ruth Messinger's insights into this tragic situation were striking. She described how the new arrivals are joining an estimated 800,000 undocumented immigrants who are already living and working here in the greater New York City area, and have been for some time. She stressed that the term "illegal immigrant" is a slur used by the governors of Texas and Florida to defame people who are fleeing a disastrous situation. Because of the acute political, economic and environmental crises being suffered in countries south of our US borders, the proper term for those trying to escape such dire situations should be "refugees."

Messinger went on to assert that the new arrivals will be a great asset to New York City's economy in the future. The first words out of the mouths of many getting off the buses are, "How can I find some work?" She acknowledged that there are language, housing and schooling challenges to face but, tellingly, she told us that both the construction and restaurant industries have already been appealing to US Immigration officials on behalf of the new arrivals. Immigrants to the US can obtain work permits while waiting for their status to be established. However, they have to wait 150 days before they can obtain such permits. NYC's construction and restaurant industries are pleading for the process to be expedited because they are desperate to find workers.

One very sad fact about the whole situation, in Messinger's view, was that NYC officials were not coordinating policy proposals with the independent civil society organizations. She pointed, for example, to NYC's recently abandoned tent encampment project on Randall's Island. Difficult to get to by public transportation and with hardly any social service agencies located there, the proposal was finally dropped after much criticism, but not before the city had misspent 750,000 dollars.

The great majority of the new immigrants are currently living in the city's shelter system. Messinger wants city officials to broaden their thinking and to consider other housing options. The tourism industry has barely recovered economically from the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, internet technology has fostered a new working-from-home employment model for the business sector. As a result of these two new realities there are an enormous number of empty rooms in office buildings and in hotels. Messinger urged the city to seek new ways of thinking about the housing crisis it is being confronted with constantly.

Ilze Thielmann was the other, equally powerful speaker at Shaaray Tefila. Thielmann began by describing her own family as immigrants themselves, who feel deep empathy for other new arrivals to this country. She increased her activism around immigrant issues five years ago when the former president initiated a very cruel family separation policy at the southern border. This draconian measure forcibly removed migrant children from their families who were applying for asylum and placed them with US child protection services.

Thielmann painted a vivid picture of how she and her volunteer colleagues worked hard to prepare up to 250 welcome bags daily at the height of the wave of new immigrants. Besides providing the basic necessities as already described, she made a particular point of telling us how important the inclusion of stuffed animal toys in the welcome bags was in calming the many small children who were getting off the buses after traumatic journeys. Telling these children that the stuffed animals were their new friends in the Big Apple was very therapeutic, Thielmann told us. Many of the immigrants were coping with mental health issues related to depression and fear as a consequence of the stresses and physical dangers they had faced. As an illustration, she educated us to the fact that the immigrants from Venezuela, of whom there are a large number, had to cross the roadless jungle in Panama known as the Darien Gap which is sixty arduous miles long. She made it clear that the odysseys of all of the immigrants encountered at Port Authority were remarkable triumphs of human perseverance and deserved our support.

The independent, civil society efforts presented by Messinger and Thielmann are all self-financed and depend on the free donations and volunteer labor of many. They are struggling to meet, as well as they can, the needs of the immigrants still arriving by bus and now, increasingly, by plane. Thielmann added that there is a lack of food for the families in the New York City shelter system and donations of canned goods are welcome. One refugee protection agency mentioned several times during the conference was HIAS.org and support for their work was urged as well. For those wanting to learn more or volunteer, contact Team TLC at ttlcnyc.org ✣

Will Rikers' Nightmare End?

By BERNARD CONNAUGHTON

As of December, nineteen people have died in city custody or just after release. Most of the deaths—the deadliest rate in seventy-five years have occurred at Rikers Island, New York City's main jail complex. Eighteen of the nineteen people were Black or Hispanic. Six of these deaths were suicides.

"Incarceration brings a risk of death," wrote the former Chief Medical Officer for the New York City jail system, Homer Venters, in his book **Life and Death on Rikers Island**. A recurring problem detailed by Dr. Venters in this book is the adversarial nature of security forces at the jail. "Even when appropriate resources are present in a jail to provide medical care," Dr. Venters wrote, "the staff are influenced by the security forces in ways that harm patients." Because of security regulations inmates routinely missed medical appointments, sometimes with tragic results. For fear of retaliation by security staff, medical personnel and prisoners were reluctant to complain or to report injuries from beatings by correctional officers. Dr. Venters' attempts to remedy harmful conditions were routinely thwarted by security. But through careful analysis and pains-taking effort, Venters, who is an expert in social medicine, was able to document how adolescents, the mentally ill and those in solitary confinement were more likely to be victims of violence by correctional staff. As a result, and despite fierce resistance from the Correction Officers Benevolent Association, Venters' findings helped end the practice of solitary confinement for people up to the age of twenty-one at Rikers Island.

Years ago in my work as a teacher, I met Kalief Browder, an African American youth from the Bronx who was seventeen when he was arrested in 2010 for stealing a backpack, a crime he did not commit. Maintaining his innocence and unable to afford bail, he became a pawn in the criminal legal system and spent seven hundred days in solitary confinement during the three years he was jailed at Rikers Island. In 2015, two years after his case was finally dismissed, Mr. Browder hanged himself. He was twenty-two years old and was a student at Bronx Community College. "I feel like I was robbed of my happiness," he had said in an interview with **The New Yorker** following his release from Rikers Island.

It is the punitive and paramilitary nature of the penal system in the US which breeds violence and death at jails like Rikers Island. Correctional officers and prisoners alike are harmed by such a system, which security forces and their political supporters try to preserve. Dr. Venters' recommendation is to "reduce the rates of incarceration and invest in more humane and effective practices in jails."

A few of us from the Catholic Worker joined family, friends and advocates at a vigil on the steps of City Hall following the death of Erick Tavira, a twenty-eight year-old man who hanged himself in a mental health observation unit at Rikers Island on October 22nd. One of the invited speakers was Jennie Rosario-Megibow whose son, Michael Lopez, died of a drug overdose in the same mental health observation unit at Rikers Island on July 15th. Ms. Rosario-Megibow had spoken to her son the evening before his death when he phoned asking her to put money into his commissary account. Standing beside the mother of Erick Tavira in front of City Hall, Ms. Rosario-Megibow expressed grief and shock at what had happened to her son Michael and the many other people in the continuing nightmare at Rikers Island. "Help us," she pleaded. ✣

Albert Herbert 1933-2022

By LYN LaMADRID

There was always something about Albert. Little was known, but I always said Albert must've been something else in his youth. He was a charmer and a flirt. His laugh was infectious and his spirit was filled with mischief, faith and strong will. Albert had my heart and he knew it. One day changed our relationship from Albert being another person in the house to a charmer who knew he had my heart. There was a young lady who used to volunteer and she got a new job, finished school and got new place, so I made a feast in her honor. Albert came to the both of us and said, "I wish someone thought I was something special." That made me feel bad, so from that day on I started to make Albert chicken and potatoes once a month to show him, yes, he was someone special.

Albert was known to hang out on the corner bench in shades, checking out the women who passed by. He used to make me laugh when I'd serve him dinner. He'd take his dinner and then go upstairs but not before he said "I will see you in my dreams." I'd say, "Don't be fresh." His reply was, "At least I am never stale." Then he would laugh.

Albert and I rarely had a cross word between us except for one time. His room was being cleaned and I spoke to him on how he could help keep his space clean. Only then did he raise his voice to me. I just walked away. I helped that day in the morning and wasn't around in the afternoon for a week, almost two. When I returned I served him without a word. Three days after I returned he said he was sorry he raised his voice. He could deal with a lot of things but me not cooking for him or talking to him was something he couldn't.

Before that incident Albert came to expect I'd cook for him; I'd even say he took it for granted. When I showed him not so fast it changed how he viewed it. Instead of thank you for your consideration it became thank you for your love and kindness. See, Albert figured out the former didn't get you anything, but the latter got you chicken and potatoes. I used to take Albert's picture almost every time because he wanted me to show his joy over getting what he wanted.

I didn't live with Albert so I didn't have to deal with the ornery and the messy sides of him. I get the privilege of remembering the charmer. I had the privilege of knowing the dancer and the man with an infectious laugh. I don't know who Albert was to the outside world, or to anyone else, but to me he was a shameless flirt who had my heart, so anything he wanted I would make. He was a man of faith who believed we had a great friend in Jesus. He made me laugh with some of his antics. Albert loved my potato salad but he loved potato pancakes more. I spoiled Albert so much that sometimes I had to remind him that I wasn't Wendy's and having a long list of things on the menu doesn't show a grateful heart. It was always at that point when he thought I was cross with him that he would turn up the charm and make me laugh.

I have been in the Catholic Worker family for a while, and I have had two people who touched my heart—Evy who lived at Maryhouse and Albert. When Evy passed my heart hurt, and the next day I brought in things so the women and I could celebrate her life. I also said the next hardest would be when the time came for Albert. When, toward the end, his quality of life suffered, I prayed and told God that as much as I would miss the ornery charmer, please take him home. I wanted Albert dancing in heaven, young again and singing to the Lord.

I spoke about Albert so often some of my Facebook friends thought he was a man I had a romance with. When I explained, my friend Tracy shared that she had patients who have been that for her. They all knew I lost some part of my heart when he passed. I carry his laugh in my memory, the twinkle in his eye when he was trying to charm and the memory of an elderly gentleman sitting on a corner bench in an orange striped suit, matching hat and shades, trying to recapture some part of his youth.

I always say no matter what it is, I am grateful for every stop on my journey. I am so grateful God stopped me at the Catholic Worker because I got to know and spoil Evy and Albert. I got to smile and laugh. I will be making my potato pancakes soon and I bet I hear Albert's distant laugh. I thank God for putting Albert and Evy in my life. I do know I get to see only the beauty. I never lived with them so I got the gift of seeing both through a different lens. It is a gift I treasure. I get to remember a handsome gentlemen who laughed at his own barely understandable jokes, who came in dancing sometimes, and whom I remember as having a good heart. I get the gift of having those moments and will be forever touched by them. I say thank you, God, and thank you, Albert. Till I see you again. ✣

Marianne Goldscheider 1932-2022

By TOM GOLDSCHEIDER

Marianne Landré Goldscheider was an avid storyteller, a pilgrim and a fast friend to many both in and outside the Catholic Worker community. She passed away on November 14, 2022, at age ninety, at a nursing home near my brother and I in western Massachusetts, where her journey to America began seventy years ago.

Marianne was born in Cologne, Germany in 1932, a year before Hitler's rise to power. She grew up in Nazi-occupied Prague surrounded by the horrors of war and was sent into hiding while her mother was in a concentration camp. She emerged a survivor in every sense of the term: tough, resilient and able to connect with people from all walks of life. She also wanted out of post-war Europe.

Her ticket to the United States was a refugee scholarship to Mount Holyoke College. She was a quick study, completing undergraduate and graduate degrees in German literature in three years. She married Robert Goldscheider, an up-and-coming lawyer, and bore two sons: Eric and me. They lived in Geneva, Switzerland for five years before returning to New York City where she spent the rest of her life.

Marianne was a restless spirit. She was drawn out of family life by the counter-culture of the 1960s, divorced Robert, and supported herself as a single mother. Marianne was an adventurer who followed her heart. She eschewed a more conventional career path and moved downtown to live with a Spanish artist, also a war survivor. In summer she would drive off in search of places to go for long swims in the ocean or northern lakes.

In her own way, Marianne was an activist. She marched through the 1960s, young children in tow. Her lifestyle reflected her anti-materialist values. She was always drawn to communities made up of kindred spirits: Women in Black, the squatter movement, Occupy Wall Street and the Catholic Worker. She was all in: rain or shine, night or day, ready for the worst. An avid walker, she also joined a group of birdwatchers who gathered in Central Park. Everywhere she went, she formed enduring friendships.

Marianne loved to meet new people and gather up their stories. She incorporated these stories into her own experiences which she documented assiduously. She was a gifted writer with a free-flowing style and a sense of irony. If not always agreeable, she was keenly perceptive in describing her surroundings. In recent years she communicated her thoughts in her blog.

An older Marianne started visiting Maryhouse in the 1990s. She was welcomed into a community of generous spirits and found new friends from around the world there. She was a familiar face at lunches and on holidays, and helped put out the newspaper you hold in your hands. The volunteers at Maryhouse, including her dear friend Cathy Breen, helped her live independently in the neighborhood she loved until she was eighty-eight. She eventually succumbed to osteoporosis and melanoma, which necessitated her move to a nursing home. She is survived by myself and her grandchildren Joshua and Maisha Friedlander and Sebastian and Ian Coss.

Please join us for a memorial gathering honoring Marianne on Saturday, April 29, from 2-4 at Maryhouse. ✣

From the Book of Notes

By RIC RHETOR

We are here to announce the good news: we are in a new year of life! Not that you need us to state the obvious, but that's something that gives us a bit of hope in our weary world. It was just a few weeks ago that we were "A people in darkness who had seen a great Light." As we begin 2023, will we continue to bask in the brilliance of Christ's splendor?

So to start this year off with excitement, January 2nd is the 150th birth anniversary of Thérèse of Lisieux, The Little Flower. She's our splendid guide to the practice of the Little Way, a treasure trove of "how to" for living the saintly life, free of fanfare and pretensions. The Little Way is somehow lofty in its teachings on patience and humility while sweeping, mopping and "taking it like a holy person" when that first smack of dishwater hits your face, thanks to the careless labor practices of someone close by, unintentional, yes, but irritating nonetheless. Seriously, Thérèse of Lisieux packed a great deal into her twenty-four years—Doctor of the Church, biblical scholar, washer woman round the convent.

* * *

John Laforge, anti-nuclear activist as well as staff and writer at Nukewatch, will be going to jail in Germany to serve fifty days for actions directed at removing US nukes from Germany. His sentence begins on January 10th. John wrote of his action, "It can never be a crime to interfere with the deployment, rehearsals for use, or the threatened use of nuclear weapons, or to resist the US and German governments' joint plans to commit indiscriminate, uncontrollable mass destruction using firestorms and radiation."

* * *

In September Bud made a visit to Capuchin Brother Paul Fesefeldt in Boston. Paul lived and worked at St. Joseph House for a decade. Bud, an ardent Yankees fan, ventured into Fenway Park for a game between longtime rivals the Yankees and the Red Sox.

* * *

Bud has certainly been busy playing music. He played for the launching of the Dorothy Day ferry with Amanda, Anthony and Jeanine, and he claims that it was one of his all-time favorite gigs. Not one to rest on his laurels, he, along with various members of The Filthy Rotten System, offered their music to support a march for affordable housing, numerous demonstrations to end war and support immigrants, to entertain senior citizens during Sant Egidio's visits to a nursing home, and at a service at the Union Theological where Bud and Paul Stein were joined by Liam on tenor saxophone.

* * *

Annie M. and Jim attended the opening of Maryhouse alum Sarah Brook's installation, "The Need You Know It Is A Letting Light," at the Lena Horne Bandshell in Brooklyn's Prospect Park. Commissioned by BRIC Arts Media, the piece incorporates the bandshell itself as a brightly colored mural with sculptures of salvaged wood and steel. It will remain on display until May 2023.

* * *

Grace Yukich, who volunteered at our city houses in the 2000s and was a regular member of our Christmas Choir for a number of years, has released her first album, **Wisteria**. Grace, who now lives in Connecticut, and is a tenured professor at Quinnipiac University, has been working the singer-songwriter circuit there as well as performing with an all-woman punk trio, Corpse Flower.

* * *

Carla returned from the warm winds and dry heat of Arizona where she visited her old friend and Des Moines colleague, Julio. A good time as well was had with the folks at the Tuscon CW with this note of gratitude she wanted to share: "Thank you, Casa Maria, for welcoming me. I had a great time talking with Brian and helping serve soup. The love and care shown me made me feel so blessed to be a Catholic Worker."

* * *

In October Martha attended the sixth annual Korean Catholic Peace Conference in Washington, DC, where the dangers of the current war in Ukraine weighed heavily on the attendees. The reunification and demilitarization of the Korean Peninsula, like many peace initiatives around the world, is being interrupted by the current war in Ukraine.

* * *

We've had visitors galore in 'n out, sick and well, but mostly well. After the Worcester CW gathering some folks from other parts of the country came for a quick visit. A bit of a Covid-19 outbreak occurred, mostly affecting those in Worcester. A few made their way here, ended up isolating in our community, including Rich Bishop, from way out in Montana. Poor Rich, his visit was from a supine position all the way.

Theo Kayser, who stayed with us from September to November, was a quiet guy with a lot to say, and a great way with the mop handle. He was also instrumental in planning the gathering along with Mike Boover, Scott and Claire Schaeffer-Duffy plus former **CW** editor Anne Marie Kaune. We heard that Cliff, who lives up that way, got to some of the conference as well. It was a big family reunion of sorts, and we thank our friend and professor, David O'Brien, for getting the use of the beautiful space Holy Cross provided. We wonder how Michael Harank felt walking around his old campus and if he had any time to visit with his former teacher and friend David O'Brien.

* * *

Speaking of Martha, she and Jane were moved by the cover on last spring's edition of **Imprint**, a publication of the Sisters of Life. This wonderful community of religious sisters offers services to women and girls who are pregnant as an alternative to abortion. They also provide aftercare for folks getting on their feet following the birth of the baby, including some social services. Since they are local, we've had some helpful exchanges with them over the years. Occasionally, furniture for a new apartment—a crib, a beginner's potty seat. Mary L. welcomed a woman in her last trimester with the help of the Sisters of Life, that Christ room space that Peter and Dorothy spoke about providing in your own place, if possible. Also, we can't forget the fabulous Little Sisters of the Assumption, up in East Harlem, ever at the ready when it comes to practical assistance for folks in need. To echo Carla, we are blessed!

But, the beautiful cover of the spring 2022 **Imprint** is the face of a man, dark reddish-brown beard and mustache, a look of horror or fright combined with foreboding undergirded by a depth of compassion and mercy. He is looking off to his side, not directly at us. The portrait of Jesus is by Heinrich Hofmann, a 19th century religious painter.

Each in our own ways, looking for peace beyond all understanding, can find it exhilarating but fearful too. Perhaps in that portrait Jesus is frightened by what he is about to proclaim, good news for many, but violently consequential, spoken in the 18th chapter of St. John's gospel. As we gaze down toward the bottom of the cover we read, "Whom do you seek? I am He." ✣

A Declaration Of A Catholic Commitment To Trans-Affirmation

As Catholics, we firmly believe our transgender and nonbinary community members are beloved by God. We recognize that these individuals are living into the dream God had for them long before their birth. Their unique gifts remind us that God's love is dynamic and transformative. We feel called to openly state our support for this marginalized community during these times when they are increasingly faced with violence and criticism for their identities and experiences. We pledge to make an open commitment to supporting justice, equity and affirmation for transgender and nonbinary individuals throughout the Catholic Church and the world.

Justice

We call for an end to all violence against transgender, nonbinary and gender nonconforming people, for vigorous investigation into any incidents reported to civil authorities, and to perpetrators to be held to account for their actions.

We urge all medical institutions, including religiously affiliated health care centers, to adopt the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) standards of care to better serve our nonbinary and transgender communities and urge intensive promotion of the 988 National Suicide and Mental Health Lifeline and the Trans Lifeline (877-565-8860) in all settings that serve transgender and nonbinary people.

We actively challenge anyone in civil or religious authority who works to limit the rights or inclusion of transgender and nonbinary people.

We work to ensure they have housing, education, health care and social services that are safe, supportive, and foster their ongoing growth and development. These include services provided by Catholic and other faith-based agencies.

Equity

We pledge to do all we can to further equity and full inclusion in public and community spaces, by using language that does not assume a gender binary, ensuring comfortable and safe access to restrooms and dressing rooms, encouraging everyone to state their pronouns in introductions, and actively supporting public policy that protects the civil and human rights of transgender and nonbinary people.

We promote their ability to participate in sports and other activities according to their gender identity, in accordance with governing body rules, where applicable, that are equitable and supported by national transgender equity organizations.

We call for programs serving transgender, nonbinary and questioning children and youth to take all steps necessary to protect their safety, physical and mental health, and to respect their identity.…

Affirmation

We will help people understand that many challenges faced by nonbinary and transgender people are due to gender dysphoria, and the stress of navigating a culture largely based in a gender binary and that has long assumed everyone's gender identity matches the sex assigned to them at birth.

We urge families to obtain help understanding a loved one's gender identities from credible medical or mental health professionals who have experience in working in this area, or from organizations such as PFLAG, the Trevor Project, the Family Acceptance Project, etc.

We adamantly reject any efforts to direct transgender and nonbinary people to counseling programs aimed at having them become comfortable with a cisgender identity.…

We acknowledge every individual's transition is uniquely theirs and support their right to transition socially and/or medically if they so desire and at their own pace.

This statement has been signed by Dignity USA, New Ways Ministry, Call to Action, the Women's Ordination Conference, Future Church and many other communities and individuals around the country. To read the entire statement or to sign on, please see BelovedbyGod.faith.

Miriam Dancing Ex. 15:20 Helen Siegl

Synod Report on Role of Women

(continued from page 1)

priests and laity to jointly take responsibility for the mission of the Church but in their own distinct ways. Many local churches call for decision-making in the Church to be taken based on "processes of communal discernment" which include the lay and ordained working together. The report describes pastoral councils as "indispensable" while greater transparency, particularly in light of the abuse crisis, is seen as a prerequisite for a more synodal Church.

"Careful and painful reflection on the legacy of abuse has led many synod groups to call for a cultural change in the Church with a view to greater transparency, accountability and co-responsibility," it states. "All Church institutions, as fully participatory bodies, are called to consider how they might integrate the call to synodality into the ways in which they exercise their functions and their mission, renewing their structures and procedures." Furthermore, there are calls for a stronger emphasis in the Church on ecumenical and inter-faith engagement with a "more united witness among Christians and between faith communities" described as "an ardent desire." It is all part of the call for a more outward-looking, missionary Church.

The synod experience is described as "novelty and freshness," with many in the Church saying that this was the first time they had been asked for an opinion. At the same time, theologians have repeatedly pointed out that synodal processes are rooted in scripture and tradition and are an attempt to rediscover something from Catholic tradition. The document explains that moving towards a synodal church is likened to family members reuniting after a period apart.

"One could say that the synodal journey marked the first steps of the return from an experience of collective exile, the consequences of which affect the entire People of God: if the Church is not synodal, no one can really feel fully at home," the report says.

The liturgy is also cited as a key concern. Many Catholics want a more participatory form of worship while "a particular source of suffering are those situations in which access to the Eucharist and to the other Sacraments is hindered or prevented."

The quality of homilies during Mass is "is almost unanimously reported as a problem," while the way celebrations take place risks making the congregation passive observers in what is taking place. A desire is expressed for greater "diversity in forms of prayer and celebration," which makes worship more accessible.

When it comes to the Old Rite of the Mass, the document cites "knots of conflict" which need to be "addressed in a synodal manner" and that a number in the Church still feel ill at ease "following the liturgical developments" which came after the 1962-65 Second Vatican Council. Last year, the Pope restricted the use of the pre-Vatican II liturgy in a move that upset liturgical traditionalists. The synod document quotes the report from the United States, which says the restrictions on the Old Rite were "lamented" and that "people on each side of the issue reported feeling judged by those who differ from them."

The next stage of the synod process will take place in a series of assemblies in various continents from January to March 2023, which must include representatives from the whole Church. The European assembly will take place in the Czech Republic on February 5-12, 2023, while the African gathering will occur in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on March 1-7, 2023. The Central and Latin American Church is planning four different events in El Salvador (February 13-17, 2023), the Dominican Republic (February 20-24, 2023), Ecuador (February 27–March 3, 2023) and Brazil (March 6-10, 2023).

But before these take place, every diocesan bishop is to "arrange an ecclesial process of discernment" on the new document, which will then be submitted to individual bishops' conferences. The conferences will then submit a report to each continental assembly, which needs to draft a document of "a maximum of about twenty pages." These documents must be sent to the Holy See's synod office and form the working document for a summit of bishops from October 4-29, 2023. ✣

Rita Corbin

Created in the Image of God

(continued from page 1)

my grandson. He wanted to learn more. One of the first things he asked was if I was ever physically or sexually abused when I was young, because it was his understanding that people become transgender as a result of abuse. I have never been abused.

About a year after my transition, our monsignor asked if I would be interested in becoming a Eucharistic Minister. Shortly thereafter we also started an LGBTQ+ ministry in our parish.

It was through this ministry that I became aware of other similar ministries across New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York. Covid introduced the world to Zoom, and this technology has allowed so many people across the country and the world to become acquainted and to share stories. I've met so many loving, kind, wonderful Catholics whose only "fault" is that they happen to be LGBTQ+.

About four years ago, I was invited along with seventeen gay and lesbian Catholics, supportive clergy and parents to dinner with Cardinal Joseph Tobin at his residence in Newark, New Jersey. An introductory reception proceeded a beautiful dinner and conversation and after which Cardinal Tobin sat back and asked each of us, "How can I help you?" It was a beautiful and amazing evening. I have been blessed.

I often wonder, however, what is it about me that my Church fears and single out? Why am I and the transgender community selectively targeted as "seeking to destroy the family and the world" as some define it? Nothing could be farther from the truth.

I understand our faith says that "God made them male and female." But God made a whole lot more, and everything in between. Our world, science, technology, even our Church, has changed over time. Today's science asserts that something can happen in the womb, between the body and mind, causing a misalignment between the two. I don't often quote science though. I just know that I am—that God made me this way, and that God made me this way for a reason.

I don't wake up in the morning thinking about being transgender. Our lives are no different than anyone else's. We live, we work, we pray. We have families.

We ask simply to be accepted and a part of our Church, no better nor worse than divorced Catholics, or Catholics who may not follow strict Church teachings who are not condemned like transgender people are.

Pope Francis has spoken out for lesbian and gay people saying they have no choice in the matter, that "they are who they are." I pray that someday Pope Francis will understand and can say the very same thing about transgender persons.

We are not an ideology. We are not a threat. All of us are a part of God's great universe, made in the image and likeness of God, a God who is neither male nor female. ✣

Parole Process is Punitive

By IRIS VAZQUEZ HOWARD

Of all the Corporal Works of Mercy, visiting the imprisoned is perhaps Jesus' most complicated instruction. We can rather easily donate food, clothes and money, offer to help plan a funeral, or tend to a sick person. Less easily we might welcome someone in for respite, or more practically support a local shelter to do this. On the whole we can advocate, petition and vigil for these needs to be met on a larger scale, agreeing that everyone is deserving of health and home.

Visiting someone in prison is not easy, and is by design isolating and bleak, making the experience of going impractical, uncomfortable and distressing. Most prisons are in the middle of nowhere, so you need the privileges of a car and an abundance of time. The person you're visiting is being surveilled, stripped of all agency, and treated as dangerous and unworthy of basic decency. You will bear witness to this humiliation and you will experience the smallest fraction of what it is like to have your every move monitored and controlled, to be under constant disapproving watch.

I was thirteen the first time I visited an incarcerated loved one. My memories are scarce but I remember the bus to Rikers Island, going through security, being told to remove my bra because of the wire in it. I remember my brother, a few years older than me, still a child, his face bloodied and bruised, not saying much. We visited him weekly and for every holiday over the next two years until he was sentenced and sent upstate for another six. Then it was a tense two hour drive there, and a tearful two hours back. We played cards, ate vending machine food, and sat with tight throats and wet eyes not knowing what to say.

My despair became unbearable, I left home. When my brother was released I returned to greet him, but by then I was gone myself, lost to the many ways young women endure pain. Our family was abstracted: shattered, spiteful, strangers. We could not provide the supportive environment he needed, a safe encouraging place to begin again. It was the same, if not denser, dysfunction as when he left—the very lack of love, resources, purpose and hope, an unpaved road ending in behavior society calls criminal.

You could say my brother was lucky, in a profoundly relative sense: less than a decade inside and released in his twenties, in good health with many more years to live freely. There was no indeterminate sentence to be rehashed at a parole board, no forever mystery of when he might, if ever, be home. His immediate family, though unprepared and starved emotionally, were still alive and able to house him. If we are counting blessings and seeing silver linings, a few sparkle dimly in an otherwise dark abyss.

Talking about prison is complicated; there are intimate nuanced specifics and generalized political theories. There is endless discourse on reform, how to simultaneously punish and rehabilitate, and what the nature of atonement and redemption really looks like. Those who lean politically left know that prison is part of a larger racist and classist system where people are set up to fail. Those who lean dutifully toward heaven know there is no prison in God's kingdom, and both know there is no justice or mercy in court, in a cell, or at a parole hearing.

Amos 5:24 Nick Schuurman

The parole process is specifically a place to note the illogical cruelty of the prison system. A person is sentenced to a minimum number of years to serve before appearing before a board made up of former prosecutors and other political pawns. Over the course of a brief, stifled interview and a glance through records, the board judges whether a person has successfully overhauled themselves, whether their grief and remorse are sufficient, and whether their plan for reentry and reintegration into society is sound enough. More often than not they are denied, effectively sentenced to another two years before they see the board again. And again. And again.

Through my work at the Parole Preparation Project (PPP), which helps prepare people to successfully pass the parole board and have every chance to thrive upon release, I read countless letters describing the confusion and exasperation of parole denials. Letters detailing going above and beyond to complete all required programs and more, achieving multiple degrees and certificates, only to be denied. Letters asking how to take mandated programs that aren't offered, or struggling to secure verification of housing and employment options with no guaranteed release date. Many letters report being denied due to "the nature of the crime," regardless of proven decades of accountability and growth. And most letters heartbreakingly report that they are resigned to the notion that they may never be granted parole at all.

PPP pairs incarcerated people, prioritizing elders and those who have served thirty or more years in New York State, with volunteers who help them navigate the endless hurdles to achieving freedom. One does not need to be a lawyer or social worker, just a person with time and capacity to build a relationship, and the liberatory belief that prison is neither life-affirming nor redemptive, and that no one should be there for any amount of time let alone die there.

Visiting someone in prison is not simple. People always ask me, "Aren't there people who should be locked away forever?" My answer is a devout "No," understanding that this is hard for many to accept. I know that some people commit terrible unthinkable acts, but sending someone to prison never healed a wound, it only multiplies harm and fracture across generations and communities. We are called not to abandon each other, but to embrace one another in our brokenness. I believe in miracles, in a God of boundless creativity who has better plans and a radical vision for us. I have seen unimaginable human transformations and know that no one is beyond the realm of hope. ✣

"I am an irrepressible optimist. My optimism rests on my belief in the infinite possibilities of the individual to develop nonviolence. The more you develop it in your own being, the more infectious it becomes, till it overwhelms your surroundings and by and by might oversweep the world."

—**M. K. Gandhi**, January 1, 1939

Repatriate the Artifacts

By CLAIRE SHAEFFER-DUFFY

[Originally published in *The Catholic Radical*, the newsletter of Sts. Francis and Therese CW, December 2022—Eds. Note.]

Beneath a waxing November moon in 2022, Cedric Broken Nose carefully packed his black Suburban with artifacts stolen from Lakota people massacred at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. On December 29, 1890, the US army killed approximately 300 Lakota, a third of whom were women and children, in one of the worst massacres of the US and Indian wars in the nineteenth century. After the battle, the army buried its dead, some twenty to twenty-five soldiers, then left the Lakota slain exposed to an impending blizzard. Local ranchers, hired by the government, later hauled the corpses into a mass grave but not before a teamster named Nealy Williams pilfered their clothing and personal belongings to sell as curiosities. And that is how Frank Root, a traveling shoe salesman with a roadshow that rivaled P.T. Barnum's, acquired his collection which he exhibited in Eastern cities before bequeathing it to a small private museum in his hometown of Barre, MA where it resided for more than a century.

On November 5th, the Barre Museum Association returned the artifacts to descendants of Lakota slain at Wounded Knee. Two hundred and fifty people—Lakota, members of Massachusetts tribes, as well as townfolk—assembled in the gymnasium of the Ruggles Lane Elementary School for a remarkable and deeply moving repatriation ceremony which included prayers, the burning of sage, acknowledgement of great wrongdoing, expressions of deep gratitude, and a reclaiming of Lakota history in the American story. "They tried to kill us, but our spirit is still here," said Lakota historian Richard Moves Camp.

The inventory of artifacts included a Ghost Shirt worn by practitioners of the Ghost Dance, beaded necklaces, moccasins, children's toys, and stone pipe bowls and stems. Many who spoke at the ceremony said their repatriation represented for the Lakota, a return of the ancestors to their rightful place.

According to some accounts it was a dance that triggered the terrible slaughter. 1890 was a desperate time for the Lakota people. They had lost fifty-eight million acres of their territory to white settlements and were squeezed into five reservations. Many placed their hope in the Ghost Dance, a religious ceremony based on the teachings of Paiute medicine men who prophesied a great evil would eradicate the whites and bring an indigenous resurgence. Practitioners believed that dancing the Ghost Dance would hasten the redemptive calamity.

Among the movement's most famous adherents was Sitting Bull, the Lakota chief who had led a successful offensive against the US Army at the Battle of the Big Horn fourteen years earlier. On December 15, 1890 an Indian policeman employed by the federal government fatally shot Sitting Bull when he resisted arrest. After his death, his followers fled to the camp of Chief Spotted Elk, a renowned Lakota diplomat and half-brother of Sitting Bull. Fearing reprisal from US Army, Spotted Elk, took his group of warriors, women and children to the Pine Ridge Reservation where Chief Red Cloud promised sanctuary.

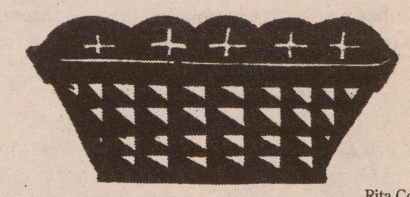
The US Army intercepted the group within a few miles of their destination and directed them to encamp at Wounded Knee Creek. The next day, when an army officer ordered the Indians to turn in the few weapons they had, some began the Ghost Dance. Misinterpreting their gestures, the 500 soldiers, who had surrounded the encampment with their fear, their suspicion and their guns, began firing. Among the myriad tragic details of that day was the killing of Chief Spotted Elk, a man who had advocated co-existence with the white communities. A black and white photo shows him lying dead in the snow, hands up, his face looking stunned and bewildered.

The US government has formally apologized for the massacre at Wounded Knee. Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren is calling for the Medals of Honor awarded to soldiers in the immediate aftermath of the attack to be revoked. At the repatriation ceremony in Barre, something more profoundly intimate than correcting the historical record happened. Those whose ancestors suffered a brutal history told their story and showed a new way forward for all of us.

"What happened here today is called *wolakhata* which means peace," said Violet Catches, granddaughter of a boy who survived Wounded Knee. At the end of the ceremony, to honor the work of the museum board in repatriating the artifacts and to thank all who came to witness the day's event, the Lakota held a traditional *wopila* giveaway. They gave handmade quilts to board members and consultant Aaron Miller, and beadwork handicrafts to everyone in the audience.

I once heard someone describe the universe as God's clothing. When we destroy life, we rend a hole in the garment, a hole that requires our hands to stitch. There are so many to repair now. As of this writing tens of thousands of indigenous artifacts are shuttered in museums across the country awaiting repatriation. It can be done, and we can become more whole, perhaps more holy people, in the process.

During the repatriation ceremony, Cedric Broken Nose, the great, great grandson of Spotted Elk, the peacemaking chief killed at Wounded Knee, told the assembled crowd he felt honored to be the one transporting the sacred artifacts back to Pine Ridge, South Dakota. He would do it the right way, "the spiritual way," he said, stopping to pray every several hundred miles or so. ✣



Rita Corbin

FRIDAY NIGHT MEETINGS

In keeping with Peter Maurin's recognition of the need for ongoing clarification of thought, we invite you to join us for our weekly Friday Night Meetings. The meetings are held at Maryhouse, 55 East Third St., between First and Second Avenues. Feel welcome to call and confirm the schedule (212) 777-9617. Masks will be available.

Feb. 17 .....**Neil Smith: Author of the Memoir to *A Goodbye to Rita & Charlie*.**
Feb. 23 .....**Fr. Ray Rodin: Caryll Houselander—Prophetic Personalism Even Now.**
Mar. 3.....**Dan Mauk: Remembering Fritz Eichenberg.**
Mar. 10.....**Christopher Landry: Psychiatry and Mutual Aid.**
Mar. 17.....**St. Patrick's Day—Join Us for Some Craic.**
Mar. 24.....**Oscar Romero—Readings and Reflections.**
Mar. 31.....**Jason Steidl: Building a Bridge? LGBTQ Catholics and the Church.**
Apr. 7 .....**Good Friday—No Meeting.**
Apr. 14 .....**Peace Agreement in the North of Ireland—Twenty-five Years of Tranquility?**

MEETINGS BEGIN AT 8:00 PM